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ABSTRACT

Issues concerning the college as a community of inquiry, scholarship, and learning are considered, based on a 1982 conference at Colgate University. The conference addressed the problem of non-community in the academy, along with different conceptions of solving this problem. Conference participants described both typical experiences of academic malaise and their views of the structural deficiencies that contribute to the malaise. Participants noted that a sense of shared commitment among colleagues, which was once experienced, is now absent. The following perceptions were expressed: that students and teachers operated as independent agents, without a shared purpose or shared educational vocabulary; that there was no common language of discourse to mediate among private perceptions; and that expectations of administrators, teachers, and students differed. For students, the problem was seen to be curricular confusions. The conference also addressed the following: problems addressed by the general education movement, causes and effects of professionalization of the faculty, the option of pursuing classic liberalism, the option represented by core curriculum programs, and the ideology and history of liberal humanism. (SW)

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On The Search for Academic Community

Background remarks for a session of the
AGLS annual meeting, San Francisco,
October 26, 1984

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As the philosopher Charles Peirce says, echoed by his disciple John Dewey, we wouldn't be here thinking and talking if we didn't have a problem. Problems alone motivate us to think. And the need to solve problems motivates us to talk. Aren't problems wonderful? After all, they bring us together. When we have no problems, we're content enough to stay at home, nurturing the pleasures of uninterrupted life, pleasures which have such qualitative uniqueness that we really could not share them with others, even if we wanted to. But, ah, the pain of doubt that strikes us when some customary habit of action no longer works. Help! we cry. We're having a little trouble here. We're not sure what to do. We don't know how to resume life as usual. Could somebody give us a little advice? In pain, we suddenly remember that we are, after all, social animals. It's OK to ask for help, since we're not supposed to do it all alone, are we? To solve problems, we need to break out of the limits that define our private lives. Problems are signs that those lives have lacked something, and now, breaking out, reaching out, we seek to make up for the lack. We hope that our collective experiences may be rich enough to spawn solutions to the problems that have interrupted our private lives. So we congregate together, seeking mutual help. We come, certain that we need help and uncertain, yet hopeful, that we will find it.

This may sound like a rather melodramatic way to describe an annual meeting of educators, even of general educators, who tend to be more troubled than many others by the state of contemporary higher education. But I believe it does capture the spirit of many of the participants at a

conference we held in 1982 at Colgate University, entitled "The College as a Community of Inquiry." I want to speak to you today about that conference and about its pertinence to your discussions of academic community and of general and liberal studies.

To begin, again, with philosophers. Charles Peirce and John Dewey developed the notion of a "community of inquiry" to portray the dialogic and interpersonal context inwhich the pursuit of knowledge, in fact, takes place. Solipsism, they would argue, is not an option--but an illusion, an attempt to claim private possession of ideas, vocabularies and methods of reasoning which the individual thinker always borrows from that social world into which he/she is born. Acknowledged or not, the community is there, not only in the origin of our inquiries but also in their end, ab initio and (ad finem). For the educt of inquiry finds its meaning only in the adjustments, modifications or innovations it recommends in the complex web of relationships which constitute a human society. If knowledge were my private possession, then its meaning would be private too. But "private meaning" is either a nonsensical notion or one in which, by definition we have no interest.

The pragmatists may claim that the concept of a "community of inquiry" simply tells us something about the way things are. If so, they have yet to explain to us why we need to hear about something that ought to be so self-evident. In Peirce's case, I know for sure that his interest in the concept of "community" was stimulated by a terrible sense of isolation, that is, of not having been integrated into the network of relationships in terms of which his own inquiry would have meaning. It appears, then, that investigators attend to those elements of reality which are in some way not

so real to them: that, for example, a study of "community" may be stimulated precisely by the experience of "non-community." This brings us back to the initial reflection, that "problems alone motivate us to think." If Peirce and Dewey study "community", they must experience the absence of community as a problem. This means, however, that "community" may not, after all, be so self-evident a concept. As I suggested at the outset, we are certain about our problems; we know when we are suffering. We are not so certain, however, about the solutions we hope to have found for our problems. Problems are real; solutions are mere possibilities.

A group of us at Colgate and at the Society for Values in Higher Education felt a need to host a symposium about

> the relationships among three topics: the nature and practice of inquiry, of community and of collegiate education and scholarship. (from the Symposium program)

We wanted educators from various disciplines to address the question "Is scholarship the activity of a 'community of inquirers?'" and, then to consider how the college would best be structured in light of their response. Obviously, we conveners came to the symposium with a shared conviction that scholarship was in some sense "communal" and that the college ought to be in some sense "communal" as well.

Three days of intense discussion among the 150 participants left me, at any rate, with a somewhat different understanding of what we all shared. Except for one or two Voltairians (who deftly combined fatalism with an ironic sense of good cheer), we shared a sense of concern about a pattern of suffering we felt was somehow fostered by our colleges and universities. We shared remarkably similar analyses of the nature and even of the sources of malaise in the contemporary academy. But we did not share any general

conviction about how to respond to this malaise. It seems we came, and departed, with several different conceptions of how to solve the problem of non-community in the academy. Let me review for you our shared sense of the Problem and our divided sense of the Solution.

The Problem

Excluding, again, the Voltairians, participants described both typical experiences of academic malaise and their analyses of the structural deficiencies which contribute to that malaise.

Experiences: Most generally, as some of us anticipated in a symposium prospectus, participants shared a perception that they and the academy had lost something that was once available. They remembered once having enjoyed a community with fellow workers, a sense of shared commitment they no longer experience. And, they surmised, their institutions once fostered such community as well. In place of "community," the participants described clusters of problematic experiences neatly anticipated in SUNY Stony Brook's institutional analysis entitled The Eclipse of Academic Community. As described by conference participant Patrick Hill, in a 1981 article,[1] the analysis "organized itself around three central concepts":[2] social atomism, the privateness of academic experience, and mismatched expectations.

For our participants, social atomism meant a perception that students and teachers operate as independent agents, without shared purpose or even a shared educational vocabulary or shared epistemology.

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[1] "Medium and Message in General Education," Liberal Education 67:2, pp. 129-145.

[2] Ibid., p. 135.

Privateness meant that each member of the academy harbors his or her own perception of what the academy was about-- or, at least, that there is no common language of discourse to mediate among private perceptions. Mismatched expectations meant that students and teachers, teachers and administrators, and teachers and other teachers or students and other students expect conflicting things of one another.

Analyses: Participants offered distinct analyses of the sources of student and faculty malaise.

For the students, the problem was seen to be curricular confusion. Another list of Pat Hill's best captures five of the six main points raised in the symposium. In the article previously mentioned, Hill calls these the five ills addressed by the general education movement:[3]

1. The proliferation of courses: Even in many core programs, says participant James Lennertz,[4] the student is confronted with a plethora of offerings designed only to meet the professional needs of the faculty.

2. The specialization of course offerings: Distributed through what Lennertz calls the faculty's pork barrel, each course offering therefore represents only the private interests of this or that teacher.[5]

3. Incoherence: Thus, in Pat Hill's words, "as a consequence of proliferation and specialization, the curriculum conveys no message about the comparative importance or unimportance of the proliferated courses."[6]

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[3] Ibid., pp. 129-131.

[4] "Returning to a More Structured A.B. Curriculum: Liberal Arts Renewal or Political Pork Barrel?", pp. 1ff.

[5] Ibid., p. 15. See also "Response to the Conference Call," by the Assumption College Community Studies Faculty, Charles Estus, Coordinator, p. 3.

[6] Ibid., Hill, p. 130.

The students are unable to find coherence in their programs, because there isn't any coherence.

4. Social Irrelevance: The one symposium speaker who did not complain about the "social irrelevance" of her college curriculum was Roberta Mathews, Associate Dean at LaGuardia Community College. The reason? "Most of the participants here," she said, "come from Liberal Arts colleges and are seeking community. I, on the other hand, come from a community college seeking the liberal arts."[7] Hill points out that, in an incoherent liberal arts curriculum, there is no systematic effort to prepare students "for the kind of world that they will be entering."[8] Mathews alerts us to the fact that the age and sociology of the student body is another determining factor. "Social relevance" can be brought in as well as brought out.

5. Absence of shared experience: In a symposium address on Dewey and Progressive education, Jack Lane attributed some of the atomization of student experiences to the progressives' comprehension of only one half of Dewey's message.

> In the rush to meet perceived needs of each student, the progressives lost sight of Dewey's holistic view of education: that learning was not just an individual matter, though it was that too.... By individualizing courses of study and communalizing living arrangements, the progressive colleges separated the concept of community from academics.[9]

This introduces the participants' sixth main concern:

6. Divorce of residential and academic life: As we'll see, this is a point of particular concern to today's co-speaker, Karl Schilling.

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[7] "La Guardia Community College: A Case Study in Collegiate Community," reprinted in The NICM JOURNAL, Vol. 8. No. 2-3 (Summer 1983): p. 45.

[8] Ibid., "Medium and Message": p. 130.

[9] "Progressive Education; The Search for Democratic Academic Community," reprinted in The NICM Journal, ibid., p. 12.

Were it circulated at the symposium, his 1982 address to the AGLS would have offered us a vocabulary for integrating our various concerns about the separation of living and learning. Entitled, "Residentiality -- A Forgotten Factor in Liberal Education,"[10] the address reminds us how, after World War II, higher education began to overlook the educational significance of residential life. For it is in the concrete events of their daily lives that students ultimately find a single medium for integrating their various studies.

Who or what is to blame for student malaise? True to their liberal heritage, the symposium participants laid most of the blame on themselves, the faculty. In a word, the faculty's sin was professionalization, identified by participants in the following manner:

1. The fact of professionalization:

For Martin Larrey, professionlization means

> that association of active academics whose community embraces fellow academicians at other institutions, indeed, in other countries, but not the colleague in the office next door.[11]

For Charles Estus et al at Assumption College, this professionalization makes of each discipline a closed community, defending its own "turf: within the academy and certifying and promoting the career-pursuits of its own members.[12]

2. The origins of professionalization:

Frederick Weaver attributes this professionalization to development of the academic disciplines as distinct professional bodies, beginning in the

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[10] AGLS Conference, Minneapolis, October 30, 1982.

[11] "Dissonance of 'The College as Community' and 'The College as Institution," reprinted in THE NICM JOURNAL 8 No. 2-3, Summer 1983:15-24. p. 18.

[12] Charles Estus, Kevin Hickey, John McClymer, Kenneth Moynihan, "Assumption College: a Case Study in Collegiate Community," reprinted in THE NICM JOURNAL, ibid: pp. 35-44.

middle and late nineteenth century.[13] Functioning in the same manner as the other professions, from medicine to engineers, the academic disciplines served the ambitions and career expectations of an upwardly mobile urban middle class. The disciplines established policies and executive bodies to "regulate the means of entry, standards of practice, and competition both within (the) occupation and between" it and other occupations.[14] For Lennertz, the disciplines thus develop according to the rules of marketplace capitalism.[15] They offer their members competitive advantages in the educational marketplace and win back from their members professional loyalty.

3. The effects of professionalization:

According to both Weaver and Lennertz, the academic disciplines have

> managed to define competence, merit and specialization in terms appropriate for professionalizing research rather than teaching.[16]

This means, on the one hand, that faculty compete for the privilege of offering courses that promote their own research interests and, thereby, promote their own status in the progression. It means, on the other hand, that students may be offered courses which serve their instructors' interests, but not their own. Weaver argues that

> the substance of disciplines is intellectually arbitrary and pedagogically awkward for undergraduate education.... In my opinion...the research orientation of academic professionalism has had the most deleterious effect on undergraduate education through its influence on the organization and content of the liberal arts curriculum.[17]

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[13] "The Liberal Arts: Professions and Politics," p. 2.

[14] Ibid., p. 3. Weaver draws this definition from Terence M. Johnson, Professions and Power (London, 1972): pp. 43-45.

[15] Ibid., "Returning to a More Structured A.B. Curriculum."

[16] Ibid., Weaver, p. 5.

[17] Ibid., p. 11.

For this reason, students are offered an array of specialized courses without integration:

> Nowhere does the student get, except incidentally from a few very exceptional teachers, a model of the liberally educated and concerned (person) (as teacher).[18]

The ultimate tendency of the faculty, concludes Lennertz, is to promote the dialectic endemic to capitalist liberalism: between opportunism on the one side and utopianism on the other.[19] We might rephrase this dialectic between individual self-interest and individual self-deception, or the tendency to describe the ideals of education in a manner which actually masks the realities.

THE SOLUTIONS

To respond to this one set of inter-related problems in higher education, the symposium participants offered three, often competing, sets of possible solutions. Listed in increasing order of interest to most participants, these are what I'll label "Scholastic," "Classic Liberal" and "Progressive" solutions.

The Scholastic Option

Without necessarily rejecting other options, the scholastics shared with us some good news: that academic community is apparently alive and well in colleges united by shared commitment to a single religious tradition.

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[18] From St. Joseph's 1967-8 Curriculum Revision Committee report, cited in John Nichols, "The Core Curriculum at St. Joseph's College" Rensselaer, Indiana.

[19] Lennertz derives the terms of the dialectic from Philip Selznick, Leadership in Administration (Evanston, 1957).

The Reverend Edward Ryan reported on the successes of the Jesuit order in presenting a liberal arts curriculum within the context of both formal religious education and, perhaps most significantly, of a program that integrates formal education with extra-curricular activity and residential life.[20] In describing the Core program at St. Joseph's College,[21] John Nichols reiterated Reverend Ryan's thesis; that Christian humanism adds a mediating--something that may be missing in secular liberal arts programs. Christian humanism is commitment, at once, to humanistic education and to a particular system of religious norms which both gives humanism its foundation and offers models for integrating formal education and lived practice.

As I argued in a more polemical presentation,[22] it may not be possible to achieve academic community without the kind of shared commitment and shared practice offered in parochial colleges. In such colleges, for example, commitment to moral authority of a particular tradition of practice may limit the influence of faculty self-interest, professionalization, and so forth. A shared faith offers students a perspective from which to integrate their liberal studies: source of coherence, of directives for social concern, of common discourse and of rules for integrating academic and residential life.

The only problem--and the reason I won't pursue the analysis here--is that commitment to the values of "Classic Liberalism" precludes most educators from even considering the scholastic option. For now, I want to consider options that more, and not less, of us might be open to considering.

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[20] "Does Campus Consensus Imply Campus Commitment?"

[21] "Liberal Education and Community," reprinted in ibid, The NICM JOURNAL: pp. 25-34.

[22] "The Liberal Arts Disease and Its Neo-Scholastic Cure," reprinted in Soundings LXV. No. 4, Winter 1982: pp. 465-475.

The Classic Liberal Option

My Colleague, Harry Payne voiced this option in his "Two Cheers for Modernity."[23] We all inherit and practice the many models of education which are blended into our liberal academy: the monastic, scholastic, humanist and now, the positivist model. If the positivist model has limitations, however, that shouldn't lead us to dream, nostagically, of returning to some simpler model.

> If our loosely organized positivist-liberal-professional cosmopolis cannot fit the ideal type of a community in the classic sense, it does provide nurturing conditions for the formation of tighter communities based on the current tasks of the complex world we have created.... I would suggest that, after perhaps a century of somewhat narrow pursuit of liberal and positivist professionalism, a different order (in tentative but effective alliance with older orders) is coming of age, albeit sometimes slowly and unevenly.[24]

In other words, don't be hasty. If you wait, things may get better. If you press for immediate, radical solutions, things could get worse. In too hasty an effort to restore academic community, you might subvert what may be the higher values of liberal education: free inquiry, critical rationality and pluralism. For the classic liberal, "community" always sounds too much like "Gemeinshaft", that organic solidarity supposedly achieved in preindustrial society at the expense of heterogeneity and critical intelligence. The community we seek will have to respect the autonomy of each of its members.

On the surface, this approach did not seem to appeal to most Symposium

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[23] "Two Cheers for Modernity: The Case for the Contemporary Academy," reprinted in ibid, Soundings: pp. 456-464.

[24] Ibid., p. 464.

participants. After all, they congregated to share criticism of things as they are and were not about to join in praise of the status quo. On closer inspection, however, let's see if even the radicals in the liberal arts are willing to challenge the values that underlie classic liberalism.

The Progressive Option

Most Symposium participants were radicals of the Progressive variety, meaning those who trace their educational values in some manner back to John Dewey. These progressives are satisfied neither with the status quo nor with what they might consider religious atavism. Instead, they seek to generate new patterns of educational community that will not threaten the autonomy of the liberally educated person. How is this possible? As you might anticipate, it has something to do with what they call a "Core Curriculum," exemplified at the Symposium by Pat Hill's Federated Learning Community and represented in today's session by Karl Schilling's Western College Program of Interdisciplinary Studies.

Let's briefly review the programs--with which most of you are already familiar.

Both are designed to address the problems of liberal education we have already considered and both recommend a solution that combines the following elements:[25]

1) an elective program for a limited group of students:

The FLC is a program within SUNY Stony Brook--attracting 50+ students in 1982-3; Western is a program within Miami University, advertised as a

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[25]Sources: Patrick Hill, "Principles and Structures of The Federated Learning Communities of Stony Brook: Reflections on General Education," address presented at the Coloquio Sobre La Educacion General, San Juan, Puerto Rico, September 24, 1981; "Intergenerational Communities: Partnerships in Discovery," forthcoming publ.; Karl Schilling, "Enhancing Miami's Residential Program," unpubl; "A Look at Western," Miami University Catalogues.

"small school within a big school" and attracting 100+ students in 1984-5.

2) a common curriculum for its students:

The FLC "federates" six already existing university courses into "two or three continuous thematically coherent semesters," to which it adds a Program Seminar in which the group's course work is discussed. More typical of Core Curricula, Western offers its students a specially designed program of interdisciplinary courses, with upperclass seminars.

3) a small group of faculty attached to the program:

Faculty from the six federated courses of FLC meet regularly to coordinate their presentations; all six team-teach an additional Core Course; a faculty "Master Learner" attends classes with the students and leads the Program Seminar. Western has a full-time faculty of thirteen, who plan the program, teach the courses and share in special, extra-curricular presentations.

4) a curriculum that integrates rather than replaces the University's existing variety of academic specializations:

In FLC, the six courses are federated through the agency of themes reflecting "somewhat urgent contemporary issues," such as "Technology, Values and Society," or "World Hunger." These themes provide the background for discussion in the Program Seminars. At Western, the Core courses "address a problem or issue from the views of several disciplines," for example, "Energy," or "The Arts," or "The Individual in Society."

5) some integration of academic and non-academic collegiate experience:

FLC students (and faculty) spend so much time together in their academic setting, that they tend to bring their shared concerns and interests with them outside of class. Western students have a more formal program for

integrating "residentiality" with academics. Here, the students live together as well, since Western's is a separate, small campus within the University.

EVALUATING THE SOLUTIONS

Three different responses to a shared analysis of contemporary problems in education. Which solution works? For now, I'll write-off the first two: since most of us here might consider the religious option atavistic or at least unrealistic, and the classic-liberal option as merely a restatement of our shared condition. To evaluate the Progressive Solution, I'll recommend a pragmatic approach: dear to Dewey and, in particular, to Peirce. The method is to judge a solution good if it works, which means if it tends to resolve the problems which have arisen within some behavioral practice. If the method sounds simple in theory, we'll see it gets a little more complicated in practice.

Step One: Judging the Short Range Consequences:

The FLC and the Western programs have been in operation long enough only for us to judge their short-range consequences. According to reports gathered by their directors, they seem, indeed, to be responding to the problems we considered earlier. Both programs offer coherence among University courses, both offer methods for integrating specialized material, both give students a sense at any rate that they are confronting socially relevant issues and both offer students shared experiences. For faculty, both programs offer a focus on cooperative teaching that complements, apparently without obstructing, their research interests, and both, therefore, tend to moderate the influence of excessive faculty professionalization. Faculty work together, outside

as well as within their disciplinary specializations, responding to as well as guiding student interests. If meetings of Western graduates and faculty display the kind of enthusiasm I've seen at those hosted by FLC, both programs have given their participants a feeling of having shared significant learning experiences for at least a short span of time. Both have offered their participants a taste of what it means to engage in a community of inquiry without interfering with the individual participant's pursuits of various personal and professional goals. Both have done something, therefore, to re-match faculty and student expectations and to offer participants a sense of academic community.

Step Two: Judging the Longer Range Consequences:

The problem now is to evaluate how far we can generalize this success story. We know for sure only that the progressive solutions have worked in the very short run. In the long-run, and for a wide range of students and institutions, will they resolve the problems that face contemporary liberal education? Without long-range sociological evidence, the pragmatic method of evaluation becomes both analytic and historical. We must articulate the most general value assumption which inform the progressive solutions and then see if we can find historical precedents. If we find precedents, we'll be able to judge the present practices by the successes or failures of their antecedents.

Through various writings,[26] Pat Hill has articulated the assumptions which informed his conception of the FLC. Most simply put, these are

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[26] Ibid., " Medium and Message"; "Principles and Structures..."; "Intergenerational Communities...."

1) that educators can and must create structures that will stimulate academic community, while at the same time 2) recognizing and working within the values of modernity, which are: diversity, individual freedom and mobility, self-determination and specialization of function. These values, says Hill, reflect the urbanity of modern life. Recognizing our urbanity, we seek community without indulging in the romanticism of those conservatives who dream of recovering some pre-urban Gemeinschaften. In the Gemeinschaft, community was achieved through homogeneous and hierarchical structures which excluded the diversity integral to modern existence. The new community we are now prepared to create will simply allow for interaction and dialogue among its self-determining members.

In his paper on Residentiality, Karl Schilling cites, with approval, the following list of educational values which do and ought to inform the development of liberal arts community:[27] 1) thinking critically; 2) learning how to learn; 3) thinking independently; 4) empathizing, recognizing ones own assumptions and seeing all sides of an issue; 5) exercising self-control for the sake of broader loyalties; 6) showing self-assurance in leadership ability; 7) demonstrating mature social and emotional judgment; personal integration; 8) holding egalitarian, liberal, pro-science and anti-authoritarian values and beliefs; 9) and, participating in and enjoying cultural experiences.

Now, where in Western history do we find precedents for the value assumptions expressed in both Hill's and Schilling's papers? I believe they can be found in what I have elsewhere labeled the ideology of liberal humanism. This represents the developing belief system of a tradition of thought and

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[27] Compiled by McClelland, Winter and Stewart, "in a recent review of the literature on liberal education."

practice which had its origin in medieval neo-platonism, which achieved its classic expressions in Renaissance humanism and then again in Enlightenment humanism and which, I believe, informs our own conception of liberal education.

The Precedent of Liberal Humanism

Condensed into a brief list of values, the ideology of liberal humanism would sound something like this:[28]

1. Humanity has the potential and obligation to create itself:

Stripped of its originally mystical vocabulary (to which I'll make reference later), liberal humanism appears to endow humanity with the powers Biblicists and, for that matter, classical Hellenists would attribute only to God or to the gods. Note how Hill speaks of our goal of creating structures to stimulate community. Elsewhere he writes that

> Resurrecting older notions of community at this juncture in history can serve as a refuge from the difficult task of being human in a pluralistic age. In the most general terms, the task of both city and the university is the creation of a new concept of community....[29]

In other words, we have the power and obligation to create something new. Again, in Schilling's list, we read only of the need to develop human powers--never of the need to learn how to submit to the authority or bend to the reality of powers other than our own. The progressive solutions celebrate human creativity with muted concern for its limits.

2. Humanity can realize its potential only through the activity of individual human beings.

Don't Hill and Schilling speak of the need for community? Yes, but they never attribute to human community or human society the power of

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[28]Condensed from two articles of mine: "The Religion of Liberal Humanism," The NICM JOURNAL Vol. 8. No. 2-3 (Summer, 1983), pp. 95f; and "Not for God, Country or Yale: The Religion of Liberal Academia," forthcoming.

[29]Ibid., "Media and Message...," p. 134.

creativity. For Hill, community is solely a condition of interaction among autonomous individuals, whose goal is to "exercise meaningful freedom in an environment of diverse options and perspectives".[30] He does not say, with Charles Peirce, that we belong to communities by nature and that our conceptions of autonomous individuality are illusory. Instead, with John Dewey, Harvey Cox and against "Heidegger, Foucault and Rorty," and therefore Peirce, he argues that we have acquired in modernity another nature, intrinsically individual. In Schilling's list, the individual disclaims the propriety of selfhood only to the extent of "recognizing ones own assumptions and seeing all sides of an issue" and of "exercising self-control."

3. Individual human beings achieve dignity and moral worth only to the extent that they realize their humanity, that is, by becoming self-creating beings.

It is not only necessary, but good to hold "anti-authoritarian values". Apparently, educators need not concern themselves with the values of humility, respect, self-limitation, faith, obedience. While Schilling's list includes "self-control for the sake of broader loyalties," we don't know whether the loyalties serve merely instrumental ends. The specific nature of loyalty is not a pressing concern.

4. By implication, therefore, social organizations are formed for the sake of the individual human beings in them, which means to enable individual human beings to achieve dignity and worth. Social organizations, therefore, have only instrumental value. They are good to the extent that they foster the autonomy of their members.

The educational values in Schilling's list all concern the self-interests of the students; none concern the students' obligations to the institution that serves them, nor, for that matter the students' relationships to the persons and organizations that work with them. Of course, in discussing

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[30] Ibid., "Principles and Structures...," p. 6.

the means through which Western ought to develop its residential program, Schilling is sanguine about the complex needs of the institutions which will implement the program. And, certainly, Hill is not naive about the need for rigorous institutional control in implementing the FLC: to produce, in Dewey's terms, "a simplified, balanced and purified learning environment." But the educational values Hill explicates do not reproduce his own social realism. He hopes that students will love and respect their educational program: but only because it is a program designed specifically for them.

A Brief History of Liberal Humanist Institutions

Having demonstrated significant parallels between our progressive solutions and the ideology of liberal humanism, our task is to consider how that ideology achieved institutional expression. Historically, what do liberal humanist educational programs look like and how have they fared?

In a recent article, Harry Payne reviews the history for us.[31] He indicates that historians seem to agree fairly well that something like the ideology of liberal humanism made its first comprehensive appearance among the Italian humanists of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. And it appeared as the theoretical underpinning of an educational revolution: the birth of the liberal arts college.

The humanists, writes Payne, drew on three sources of guidance for their revolution:

> the treatise of Vergerius, De Ingenuis Moribus... the resurrected full text of Quintillian's Institutes of Oratory; and the educational program instituted by Vittorino de Fletre for the Gonzaga of Mantua at

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[31] "The Renaissance of Liberal Arts: Historical Reflections on an Idea," Liberal Education 67 no. 4 (Winter, 1981), pp. 263-274.

> La Giocosa (The Joyful Place), which may be taken as the first modern liberal arts college. The subtle variations were many, but Vergerius' formulation ... can serve as the paradigmatic Renaissance statement of the aims of liberal education: "We call those studies liberal ... which are worthy of a free man; those studies by which we attain and practice virtue and wisdom; that education which calls forth, trains and develops those highest gifts of body and mind which ennoble men, and which are rightly judged to rank next in dignity to virtue only!"[32]

The liberal studies, said Vergerius, are, first, history, moral philosophy and rhetoric, and, secondly, the arts. "Of the three professional disciplines--medicine, theology, law--he has little nice to say."

Professional training, in fact, symbolized the educational institution against which the humanists were rebelling: the scholastic university, with its monastic antecedent. The focus of monastic inquiry was "the intensive reading of sacred texts."[33] In the scholastic universities of tenth through thirteenth century Europe., that reading was made both more sophisticated and rarified. Wedding Aristotelian logic to the procedures for disputing canon law, the schoolmen sought to accommodate the sacred traditions to their experiences of an expanding social and material world.[34] The product was a subtle and eloquent literature whose significance was apparent only to other schoolmen, but whose mastery became the means of entree into the various professions. The schoolmen controlled the professions and their style of pre-professional training dominated the universities. Sound familiar?

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[32] Ibid., p. 267.

[33] Ibid., Payne, "Two Cheers for Modernity," p. 458.

[34] Ibid., p. 459.

Renaissance liberal humanists thus promoted their educational policies in response to the limitations of scholastic professionalism. "The humanists largely proposed to circumvent the medieval university through a revitalization of the non-professional, non-theological aspects of education they saw neglected at the dominant institutions."[35] This means that the liberal arts programs were designed to supplement but not necessarily replace the university programs. The humanists were not offering alternative means of training the society's doctors, lawyers and theologians. Instead, they offered education

> for those who either did not need a profession or had leisure to wait before entering more narrow professional training.[36]

Humanists educated the aristocracy.

It seems fair to conclude, therefore, that Renaissance humanism did not offer any comprehensive program for humanizing the professions which serviced the quotidien needs of Renaissance society. The ideology of humanism developed in dialectical relationship to a scholasticism it could enrich, but not replace. For this reason, humanist curricula were not geared to teach students about those institutional and organizational realities they were supposed to encounter in extra-curricular or university life. From the start, liberal humanists worried about the private person and left for others the task of training the social and organizational person.

What precedents did the humanists have for such a specialized approach to education? If we look a little deeper into the prehistory of medieval Europe, I believe we'll find those precedents in the Christian neo-platonism of the Early Church Fathers.

[35] Ibid., "Renaissance," pp. 266-268.

[36] Ibid., p. 6.

The tendency that links Augustine's forebears -- from Justin Martyr to Origen, Clement and Eusebius-- is to identify the Logos of the Gospel of John with the logos of neo-platonic philosophy. In other words, it is to declare the identity of the incarnate God of Scriptures with the intelligible structure of the created or natural world. This offered the Church Fathers a conception that was available neither, let us say, to Plato nor to Moses: that, by way of the Incarnation, that divine creativity which generates both moral and natural worlds is available to the individual human mind. Perfected through centuries of reflection that link the efforts of Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius and Meister Eckart, it is this conception, and this conception alone, that generated the revolutionary doctrines of early Renaissance thinkers like Nicholas of Cusa and later Renaissance thinkers like Pico and Ficino. It enabled Cusa to declare that,

> human nature, raised to union with the maximum would exhibit itself as the fullest perfection of the universe.... But humanity has no real existence except in the limited existence of the individual. Wherefore it would not be possible for more than one real man to rise to union with the maximum; and this man assuredly would so be man as to be God....This being is Jesus, ever blessed, God and man.[37]

And it enabled Pico to declare that,

> the Greatest Artisan ordained that the creature to which he could give no special property should, instead, possess the endowments of every individual being in common with it.... Setting him in the centre of the world, (the Creator) said to him: "...You alone are bound by no limit, unless it be one prescribed by your own will, which I have given you...."[38]

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[37] Nicholas of Cusa, Of Learned Ignorance, Bk. I, Ch 1, G. Heron, trans. (New Haven); p. 7.

[38] Oratio de hominis dignitate, Opera fol. 314ff; cited in Ernst Cassirer, The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, M. Domandi, trans. (Philadelphia, 1963): p. 85.

In other words, the Renaissance humanists' notions of human freedom and autonomy are implicitly neo-platonic-Christian notions. Greco-Roman philosophies, alone, did not extend to the human being such radical freedom; Biblical doctrines, alone, attributed radical freedom only to the one God, as Creator or as Incarnate. There is this difference, however, between the humanists' notion and that of their patristic and medieval forebears. From Justin Martyr to Cusanus, the Christian neo-platonists offered their disciples access to divine freedom only by way of participation in the disciplines, doctrines and communities of the institutional Church. For Origen, the soul might struggle for freedom from the body, but it gains its victory only through the agency of the body of the Church. While couching their anthropology in the vocabulary of Christian theology, the Renaissance humanists appear to have made this dichotomy of body and soul more radical. Leaving concern about the institutional body of the Church to the "medievalists," they initiated a practice that later liberal humanists would make into a rigid policy: of nurturing the soul only through its own agency, that is, through the agency of logos, or rational science. The history, philosophy, rhetoric and arts of the Humanists were delicacies for the soul, needed supplements for the scholastic curricula, but inadequate of themselves to discipline the body of Renaissance society.

What is the significance of this dichotomization? It suggests

1) that the philosophy of Renaissance humanism selectively abstracts one element of Christian neo-platonism: the potential freedom of the individual human soul;

2) that this abstraction is stimulated by the humanists' shared sense of a profound problem in scholastic education. The overly esoteric and

overly professionalized universities had ceased to be fully representative of their Christian heritage. Specifically, they had ceased to nurture the liberation of the human soul, that is, in their vocabulary, to raise their students in the image of Jesus Christ. The humanists' concern for "freedom" is the telling symptom of this lack.

3) That the humanist liberal arts curriculum expresses their sense of a problem in scholastic education, but does not also offer a long range solution. Vergerius' curriculum is like a declaration: "O Scholastics!" Take care of the soul which, you have neglected and whose life is symbolized by these humanistic studies." But we have no evidence that these studies could, of themselves, also foster the soul's emancipation from its many bonds here on earth. The curriculum is woefully limited. What habits of moral discipline can it inculcate in the character of the young student? What guides for achieving self-control? For controlling the passions? For controlling selfishness? Or, for that matter, what instruction can it offer to raise students strong and subtle enough to help discipline a troubled society: an Italy, for example, moved by wars, and by revolutions in commerce, science and religion? Rather than address the exhaustive variety of inquiries fostered by the scholastic university-- and, therefore, rather than address the real problems evident in each one of these inquiries-- the curriculum offers its students shelter from the changing social realities which have oppressed the humanists.

4) that the liberal arts curriculum could serve at most as a supplement to the scholastic programs. As Payne suggests,

> most liberal arts colleges and curricula were, in fact, grafted onto existing medieval universities and models. The ideal was compromised almost from the outset and remains compromised,

> as professional faculties and social demands bring agendas foreign to the humanist love of learning and citizenship, now as in previous centuries.[39]

Even as a supplement, the liberal arts curriculum could not of itself offer a solution to the profound problems of the scholastic university. For the curriculum responds to symptoms, rather than to the sources, of those problems.

There is no space for us, here, to analyze carefully what these sources may be. Unlike most studies of the modern university, such an analysis would have to take very seriously the Christian roots and purposes of the university. Even if expressed in a non-theological vocabulary, the university's goals cannot be understood apart from the efforts of the Church Fathers to syncretize hellenistic philosophy and Biblical faith, messianism and moral law. Redeeming Europe (if not humanity) from ignorance, transforming our natural and social environments in the interest of a priori values and liberating the human spirit are the goals of a Christian religion whose most dedicated missionaries have become university professors.

Since they first emerged out of the cathedral schools of tenth through twelth century Europe, these professors have been as adept in criticizing their own mission as they have been in promoting it. One gets the impression that a dialectic of self-affirmation and self-criticism belongs to the mission itself, that it is by way of that dialectic that Christendom, or what we call the West, spreads its revolution.

LIBERAL HUMANISM, THEN AND NOW

Perhaps we are, now, experiencing one of those times of self-criticism. At the Colgate symposium, and here today, we congregate together to share

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[39] Ibid., "Two Cheers for Modernity," p. 460.

our sense of the problems of the university: perhaps not unlike the way Renaissance humanists congregated together five or six centuries ago. There are, after all, some significant parallels between their concerns and ours. Both Renaissance humanists and we liberal humanists complain about the university's insensitivity to the concerns of the human soul. Both seek to institute curricular changes that are supposed to humanize education: to offer students, and faculty, a sense of their shared mission which, both suggest, is to promote our freedom and dignity. Both want to realize these changes by isolating small communities of humanistic learners from what they consider the non-humanistic environments of the university. Both speak of initiating something radically new, which may transform our institutions, if not also our societies. And both seek, therefore, to describe their philosophies in a language that is unencumbered by the vocabularies of the past: for the Renaissance humanists, this meant severing ties, at least verbally, with the institutionalized Church and its Scholastic partners; for the liberal humanists, this means, at least verbally, severing ties with Christianity in general, with religious traditions, and with the social institutions that do the everyday work of training our children and servicing our polity.

If we are conscious of our past, it seems we have a choice of whether or not, purposefully, to carry out the analogies with Renaissance humanism even further. We might conclude that both we and the Renaissance humanists instituted changes which served our short-range interests but did very little to modify the long-range tendencies of the university. Or, at most, we might conclude that our special curricula were adopted by some universities to delight, entertain, or enrich some select sub-communities. That would

be nice. But it would not be fully consistent with our goals, or our pretensions.

When we gathered at that Colgate symposium, we declared our common interest in examining means for promoting academic community in the university. For reasons I'll suggest in conclusion, I believe we did very little to promote such an examination. Nonetheless, we accomplished something else. Our shared concern about academic community was at the least a symptom of our shared sense of dissatisfaction with everyday life in the university. However much or little we understood about the purpose of the university, we knew for sure that it was not serving all of our purposes, or those of the colleagues and students we knew and trusted well. We knew for sure, furthermore, how to define our own purposes and how to design programs of learning which, at least in idea, reflected those purposes. Our definitions approximated, at least in idea, what I've called the ideology of liberal humanism and our programs what we all call the core curricula of the liberal arts. However much or little our definitions and programs might serve the interests of the university in general, we were undoubtedly right in believing they would successfully serve our own. The FLC and Western programs make good sense to us.

But how about the rest of the university population, today, and in the future? Were Charles Peirce with us today, I don't think he'd approve of our efforts to generalize so readily from our sense of what we want to our theories of what the university itself needs. He'd warn us against confusing two different kinds of problem and therefore two different kinds of problem-solving.

Individual human beings, he would say, suffer two kinds of problems, symbolized by the two examples of hunger and isolation. When I am hungry,

I at the same time know I want to eat. The desires that accompany this kind of suffering are, generally, reliable indicators of the source of the suffering: the lack of what I desire. Hunger belongs to the class of problems which reflect a lack within what I am as an individual. The desire to eat belongs to the class of solutions I can adopt to resolve my individual needs. When I am isolated, however, I suffer pain, but the desires that accompany it offer no reliable indicators of the source of that pain. I may feel desires to eat, or run, or seek company, or not eat, or not seek company. When I follow the desire, I may feel momentary relief as the particular desire fades, but another desire soon takes its place. My desires have not led me to the source of the problem. This is because "isolation" belongs to the class of problems which reflect a lack in my relationship to the outside world. It is not "my" lack per se. Something is missing first in the world, not in me. So nothing I do, alone, can make up for what is missing. The missing something will have to do something for me. I don't even know what's missing.

At the Colgate symposium, we treated "community" as something that was missing in each of us and in our students. To find what was missing, we consulted our own desires and theirs. Our desires were to "create our own environments, to be self-determining," and so on. The ideology of liberal humanism, in other words, was the language of our shared desires. The programs of FLC, Western, and so on, were our shared methods for fulfilling these desires. And, in the short run, the methods seemed to work, for, busily engaged in these programs, we and our students found momentary relief from the suffering that brought us together in the first place.

If Peirce is right, however, following our desires is not going to work for long. Busily seeking relief, we have not as yet discovered the

source of our problem. Or, better put, the lasting solution has not yet come to us. As we have seen in a brief analysis, we suffer from a problem that has appeared throughout the history of the university. Our suffering is a mere symptom of fundamental tensions within the university and, therefore, within the civilization which the university serves. This civilization has a lot to do with Christianity, a point worth emphasizing only because the academic community does not seem to take it seriously enough. The problems of the university, therefore, must concern the problems of Christianity as well. If these are problems that liberal humanists are not in the habit of considering, then that habit may itself be telling. The experience of "lacking community" must belong, after all, to the class of problems which reflect a lack in our relationship to the outside world. Our undeveloped relationship to the Christianity that moulded our own institutions may, then, belong to the same class. If so, our attempts to refind academic community must now include attempts to refind our relationship to the Christianity inherent in the academy.

Rebuilding academic community entails the exhaustive task of rediscovering our place in it. While we are rebuilding, we may still enjoy the relief of sharing each other's company and sharing our dreams of individual autonomy.